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THE HOODED HORSEMAN

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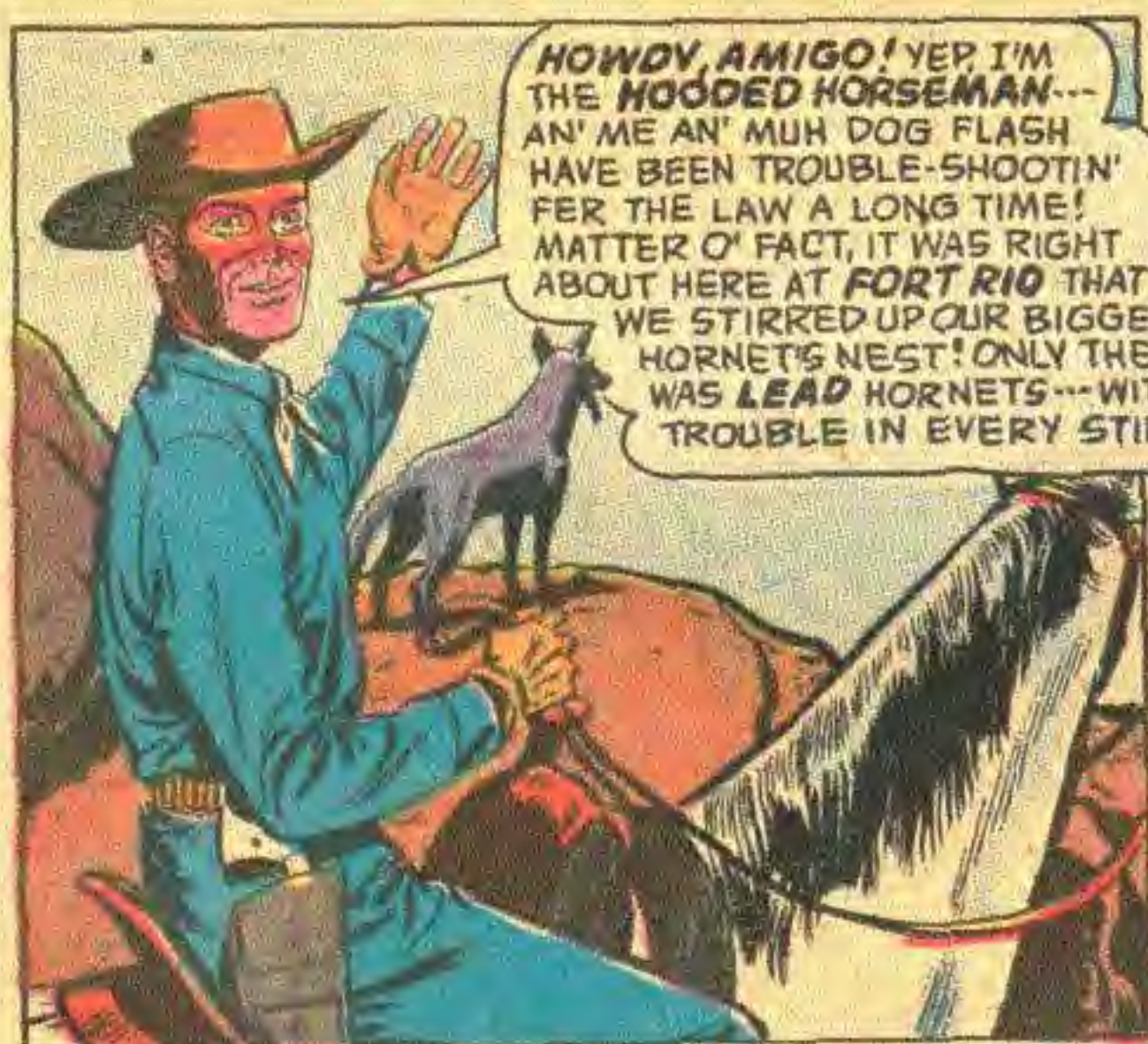
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INJUNS ON THE PROUD! AS THE DREAD CRY SWEEP ALONG THE FRONTIER, WOMEN AND CHILDREN FLED FOR SAFETY---AND MEN TOOK UP THE GRIM VIGIL, WONDERING WHEN THE COMANCHES WOULD STRIKE! AND THEY BREATHED A SILENT PRAYER FOR THAT MYSTERIOUS RIDER, THAT MASKED DAREDEVIL OF WHOM THEY KNEW LITTLE---SAVE THAT HE FOUGHT WITH BLAZING COURAGE ON THE SIDE OF LAW AND ORDER---AND HIS NAME WAS

The HOODED HORSEMAN!



IT STARTED ON THE DAY I SPOTTED A TROOP RIDIN' INTO THE FORT---

CAVALRY! THAT'S MIGHTY STRANGE ---FORT RIO'S BEEN ABANDONED FER YEARS! RECKON I'LL AMBLE DOWN AND SEE WHUT'S COOKIN'!



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RIGHT FROM THE START, I RAN INTO TROUBLE... A CATANKEROUS LIEUTENANT, WITH TEMPER IN HIS EYE!

ASKIN' QUESTIONS OF THE ARMY, EH? SAY, MAYBE YOU'RE A SPY! TAKE OFF THAT MASK AND LET'S HAVE A LOOK AT YUH!



RECKON YUH NEED A LESSON IN MANNERS, FRIEND!

UGH!



STRIKE AN OFFICER, WILL YOU? ALL RIGHT, BOYS... SABRES!

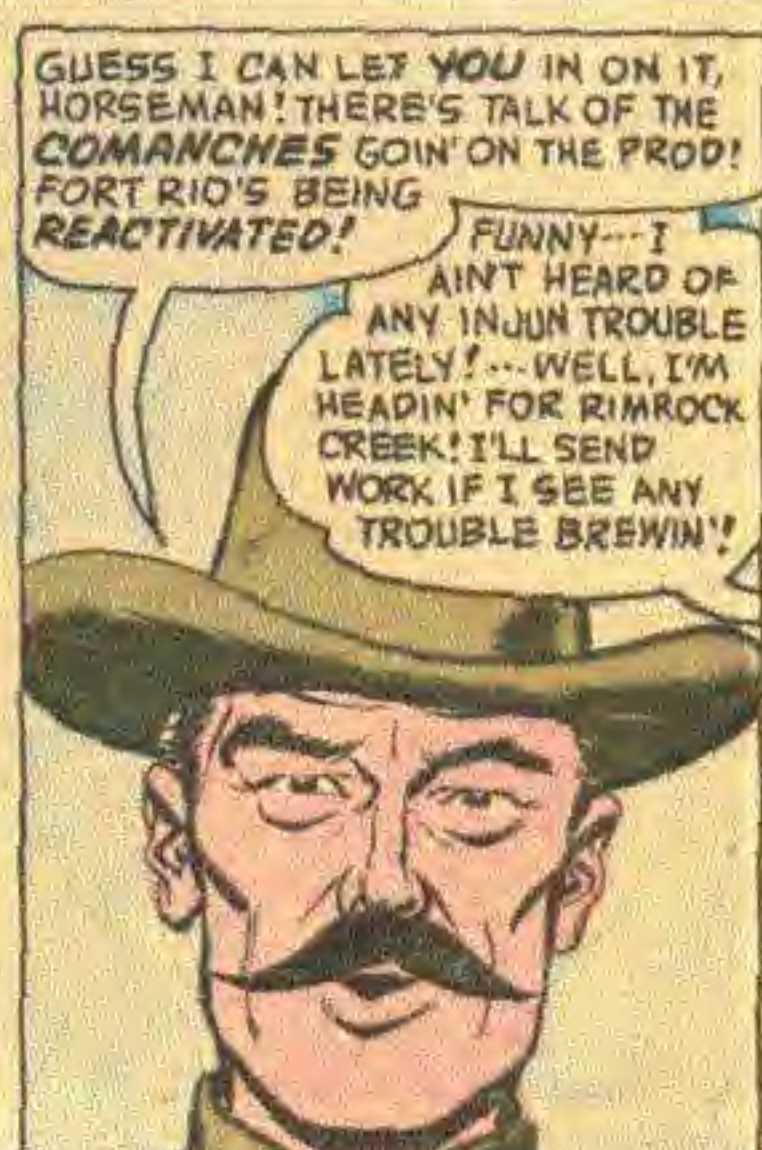
AT EASE, MEN! WHAT'S GOIN' ON HERE?



THAT INTERRUPTION CAME JUST IN TIME! IN ANOTHER MINUTE, I'DA BEEN PUNCTURED LIKE A PIN CUSHION!

I SAW EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENED, AND I'M SORRY FOR IT! I'M CAPTAIN TRACY... LIEUTENANT KRAGG IS NEW IN THESE PARTS, OR HE'D HAVE HEARD OF THE HOODED HORSEMAN!

SORRY ABOUT THE FRACAS, CAP'N! I JUST RODE IN TUN SEE WHUT BRINGS THE CAVALRY TO FORT RIO!



GUESS I CAN LET YOU IN ON IT, HORSEMAN! THERE'S TALK OF THE COMANCHES GOIN' ON THE PROD! FORT RIO'S BEING REACTIVATED!

FUNNY... I AINT HEARD OF ANY INJUN TROUBLE LATELY!... WELL, I'M HEADIN' FOR RIMROCK CREEK! I'LL SEND WORK IF I SEE ANY TROUBLE BREWIN'!



RIMROCK CREEK, EH? THAT'S JUST WHERE THE INJUNS ARE REPORTED RAISIN' NED! I WAS ABOUT TO LEAD A PATROL THAT-A-WAY... CARE TO RIDE WITH ME, HORSEMAN?

GLAD TO OBLIGE, CAP'N!



THAT KRAGG HOMBRE LOOKED KINDA WORRIED AS I MOUNTED! AND I'DA BEEN EVEN MORE WORRIED IF I'DA HEARD HIS PALAYER WITH THE CAP'N!

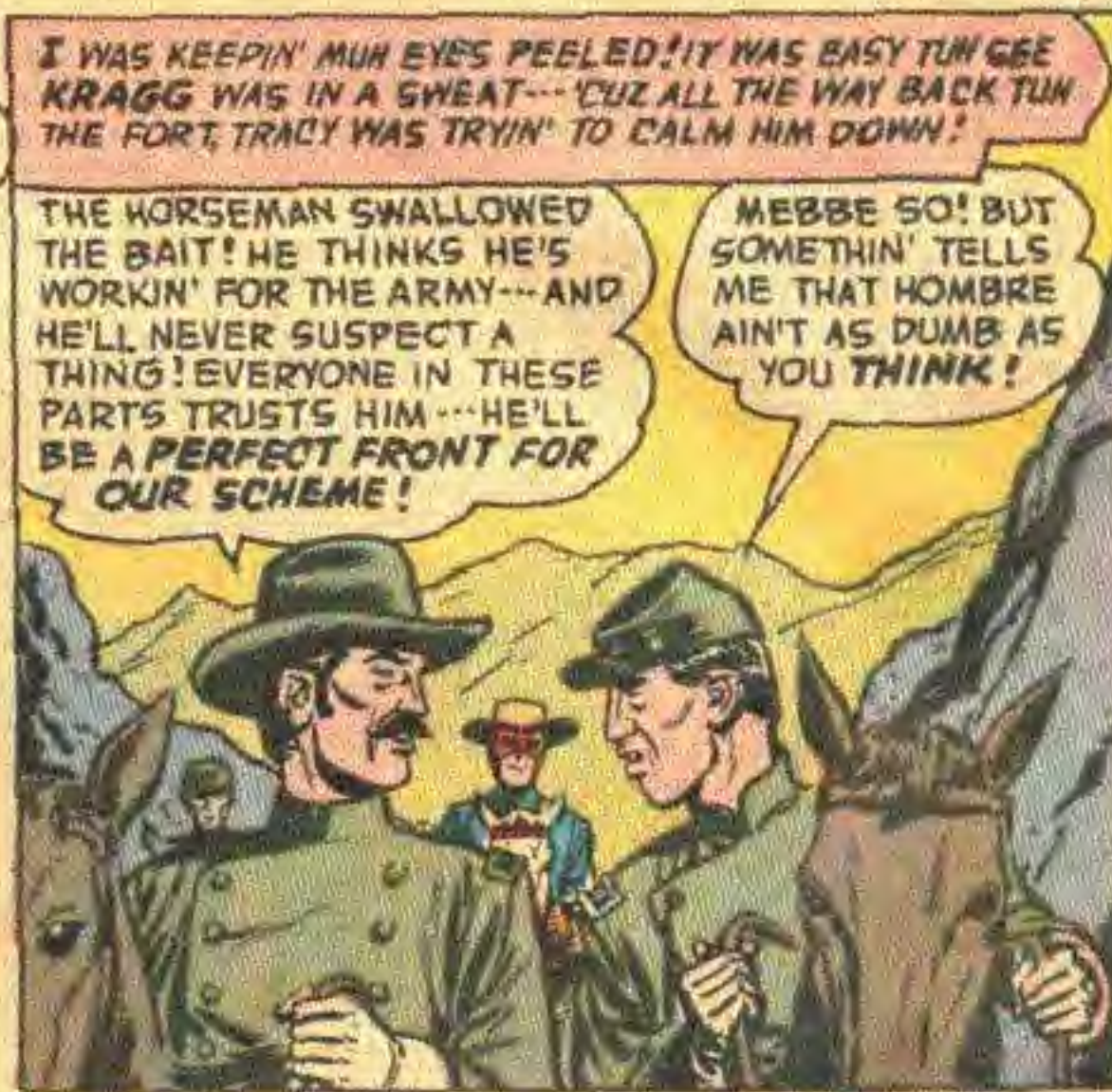
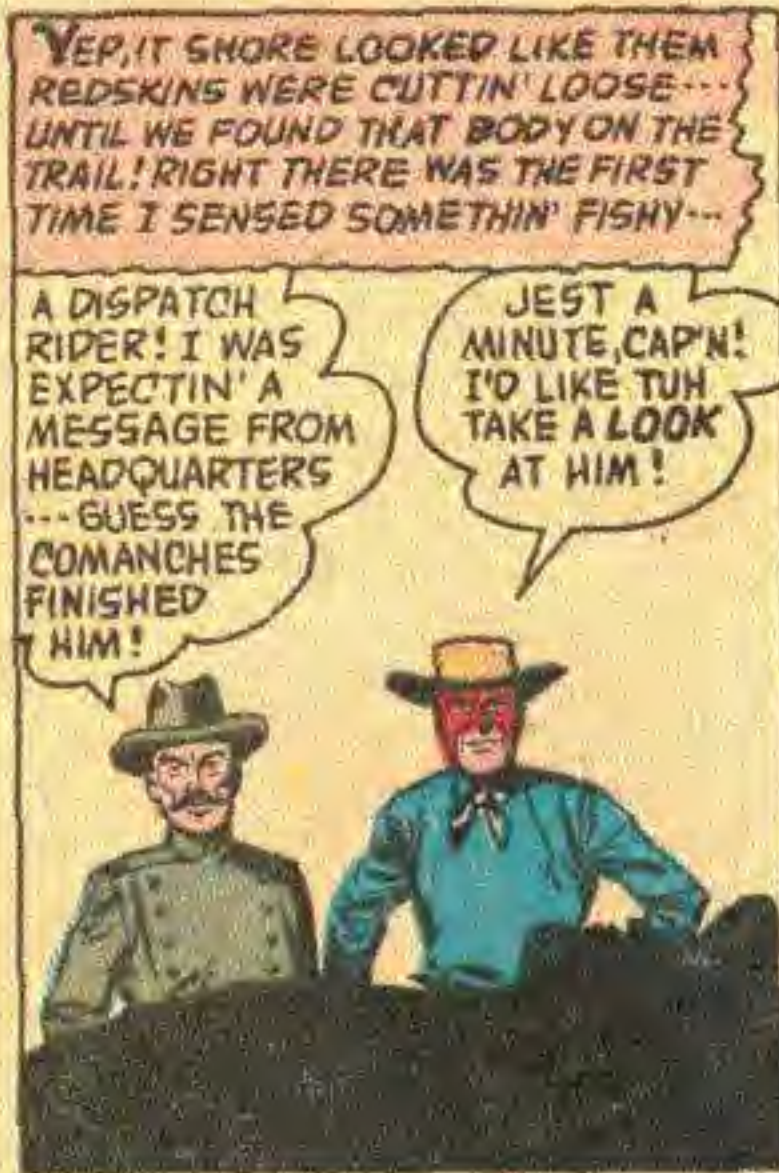
I TELL YUH, TRACY, RELAX, I DON'T LIKE KRAGG! JUST HAVIN' THIS HORSE... MAKE THE MAN CHARACTER... ARRANGEMENTS AROUND! HE'S I ORDERED! BAD MEDICINE! I DON'T WANT ANY SLIP-UPS!



I'D FIGGERED THIS INJUN TROUBLE WAS JUST TALK, BUT ABOUT TEN MILES OUT...

A RANCH... BURNED TUN THE GROUND!

NO ONE AROUND! RECK-ON THOSE CO-MANCHE DEVILS FINISHED 'EM OFF!



LOOKIN' AT THEIR DOCUMENTS JEST ABOUT
TOOK THE WIND OUTA MUH SAILS! WHY,
THAT KRAAG HOMBRE HAS EVEN A
HERO!

A CITATION
FOR VALOR—
FROM GENERAL
CUSTER! RECKON
I HAD YUH ALL
WRONG, KRAAG!

NO HARM DONE,
HORSEMAN! DON'T
BLAME YUH FOR
BEIN' CARE-
FUL!



I RECKON
THAT SETTLES
IT, CAP'N! YUH
GIVE THE
ORDERS AND
I'LL FOLLOW
'EM!



GOOD! REMEMBER,
I WANT EVERY SETTLER
WARNED OUTA THIS
TERRITORY—AND
EVERY BIT OF WEALTH
COLLECTED, SO THAT
WE CAN KEEP IT FROM
THE COMANCHES!



BELIEVE ME, AMIGOS, COLLECTIN'
ALL THAT GOLD, GREENBACKS AN'
JEWELS WAS NO DYNCH! I HAD
TUN DO SOME TALL TALKIN'—

I AIN'T HEARD
OF INJUN TROUBLE,
BUT IF THE HORSE-
MAN VOUCHES
FER IT, I'LL TURN
OVER THE BANK'S
MONEY TO THE
ARMY!

AN' I'LL SPREAD
THE WORD TO
START MOVIN'
OUT OF THE
TERRITORY!



IT WAS SURE MIGHTY FLATTERIN' TUN
SEE NOW THE PEOPLE TRUSTED ME!

MUH FAMILY'S PACKED
AN' READY TUN MOVE
OUT! I'M RELYIN' ON
YOU AN' THE ARMY
TO WATCH MUH
STOCK OF
JEWELRY!

THE
LIEUTENANT
WILL SIGN THE
RECEIPT,
FARDNER!



WAL, I GUESS
WE'VE WARNED
THE WHOLE
TERRITORY,
KRAAG!
EVERYONE'S
ON THE MOVE
HEADIN' FOR
SAFETY!



YEH, AN'
WE'D BETTER
MAKE FER THE
FORT WITH THIS
WAGON! CAP-
TAIN TRACY'LL
BE ANXIOUS
TO SEE US!

I WAS PATTIN' MUHSELF ON THE BACK
FER DOIN' A GOOD JOB WHEN SOME-
THIN' HAPPENED TUN CHANGE THE
WHOLE PICTURE!

A PANTHER!
WATCH IT,
KRAAG!

NO
NO!
HELP!



YESSIR, FOLKS! AT THE SIGHT OF THAT CATAMOUNT, OUR
BRAVE LIEUTENANT STARTED SCREAMIN' LIKE A SCHOOL-
MARN! I MADE A QUICK ROPE TOSS—

EEEE!
GET HIM
OFFA
ME!



THAT CAT TURNED IN MIDAIR AN' CAME AT ME LIKE A BAT
OUTA HADES—BUT FLASH WAS THAR FUST!

GOOD WORK,
FLASH! HOLD
HIM, BOY!





RECKON **THAT** SHOULD
CUT HIM DOWN TUH
KITTEN SIZE!

EYOWW!

BAM!



GOOD SHOOTIN' HORSE-
MAN! I WAS JUST ABOUT
TO VENTILATE THE
CRITTER MYSELF!

WARNT NO NEED
FER YUH TUH SHOOT,
KRAGG! YUH ALMOST
FRIGHTENED HIM
TUH DEATH WITH YORE
SCREAMIN'!



FER A HOMBRE THAT FOUGHT
WITH CUSTER AN' WON A CITA-
TION, YUH SHORE WERE HELPLESS
IN A SHOWDOWN!

ARE YOU
HINTIN' I'M
YELLOW,
MISTER?



I'LL TEACH
YOU TO CALL
ME A
COWARD!

SOX!



That FUST WALLOP CAUGHT ME BY
SURPRISE, BUT I CAME BACK PAWIN'
DIRT! HE WAS A BIG MAN, BUT THAR
WASNT MUCH FIGHT IN HIM WHEN
I GOT THROUGH!

I'M KINDA
TOUCHY
ABOUT
BEIN'
SLUGGED,
KRAGG!



IT WAS A FAIR FIGHT, BUT THAT SHAVE-
TAIL COULDN'T TAKE HIS LICKIN' LIKE
A MAN! HE STARTED YELLIN' FOR HELP...

GET
HIM,
MEN!

LOOKS
BAD---I'D
BETTER MAKE
TRACKS!



THIS WHOLE DEAL'S AS
PHONEY AS A THREE-DOLLAR-
BILL! BUT I CAN'T STOP TUH
FIGHT THE WHOLE UNITED
STATES ARMY! **COME
ON, FLASH!**



YESSIR I SHORE HAD MUH SUSPICIONS
OF KRAGG! BUT IT WOULD'VE CURLED MUH
HAIR TUH HEAR THE PALAVER HE HAD
WITH THE CAP'N BACK AT THE FORT!

MAYBE THAT BEATIN' HURT
YOUR PRIDE, KRAGG, BUT WE'VE
GOT A WAGON FULL OF LOOT
TO SOOTHE YOUR FEELINGS!
WITHOUT THE HORSEMAN, WE
COULD NEVER HAVE PUT OVER
THE **SLICKEST JOB EVER**
PULLED THIS SIDE OF
THE BORDER!

THEY'LL BE TALKIN' ABOUT IT FOR YEARS---HOW SKIP TRACY CLEANED OUT THE WHOLE RIO TERRITORY WITH ONLY A HANDFUL OF BADMEN AND ARMY DESERTERS TO HELP HIM!

I GOTTA ADMIT USIN' THESE ARMY UNIFORMS WAS A RIGHT CUTE IDEA, BOSS!

THERE'S JUST ONE SPOT LEFT TO CLEAN UP---THE GOLD EAGLE PLACER MINE ON THE SWEETWATER RIVER! WE'LL POLISH IT OFF AND THEN HEAD OVER THE BORDER.

YOU'RE WRONG, KRAGG---WE'VE STILL GO ANOTHER PIECE OF UNFINISHED BUSINESS BEFORE WE TACKLE THAT PLACER!



I'VE HEARD OF THE HORSEMAN, NOT EVEN THE BORDER WILL STOP HIM FROM TRYIN' TO TRACK US DOWN AND BRING US TO TRIAL! WE'VE GOT TO GET RID OF HIM, I TELL YUH!

I THINK YOU'VE GOT SOMETHIN' THERE, BOSS!

WELL, WHILE THOSE TWO VARMINTS WERE HATCHIN' THEIR PLANS, I WAS ON MY WAY TO THE COMANCHE RESERVATION TUH CHECK ON THE WHOLE DEAL! BUT THAT NIGHT---

INJUNS, EH? THANKS FER THE WARNIN', FLASH! WE'LL GIVE 'EM A HOT RECEPTION!

IF YOU BOYS ARE LOOKIN' FER TROUBLE, THIS IS THE PLACE TUH FIND IT!

BAM!
BAM!



I WAS A SMALL WAR PARTY---BUT THE PARTY BROKE UP! RECKON THEY DIDN'T CARE FER THE REFRESHMENTS ME AN' FLASH WERE SERVIN'!

OUTA THE WAY, FLASH---

--I WANT ONE OF THOSE COMANCHE FER A SOUVENIR!

NOW WHO EVER HEARD OF A COMANCHE WITH A MERMAID TATTOOED ON HIS ARM? RECKON THIS HOMBRE CAN TELL ME A MIGHTY INTERESTIN' STORY!



COURSE, IT TOOK A BIT OF ENCOURAGEMENT
---BUT BEFORE LONG, I GOT MY "COMANCHE"
TO TALK---

THEM ARMY UNIFORMS AN' THE INJUN
SCARE WAS JUST A SCHEME TUH LOOT
THIS WHOLE TERRITORY! THEY WUZ
PLAYIN' YUH FER A SUCKER
ALL THE TIME,
HORSEMAN!

IT WASNT ALL
A FAKE, HOMBRE!
THAT DISPATCH RIDER
I SAW WAS MIGHTY
DEAD!



YEAH---HE WAS A RANCHER THAT GOT
KILLED WHEN TRACY BURNED DOWN
HIS SPREAD!

I GET THE PICTURE,
HOMBRE! AN' NOW YUH'RE
GONNA TELL ME WHAR
I CAN FIND TRACY---
SAVVY?



I'LL TALK, HORSEMAN! I WAS TUH
MEET TRACY AND THE OTHERS AT
THE GOLD EAGLE PLACER MINE!
THAT'S THE LAST PLACE THEY'RE
CLEANIN' OUT!

ALL RIGHT, AMIGO!
NOW, GET ON YORE
HOSS---WE'RE GOIN'
FER A RIDE!



I NEEDED HELP TUH TACKLE THE GANG, BUT THAT "INJUN"
UPRISING" HAD THE WHOLE POPULATION HEADIN' FER COVER!
ROUNDIN' UP A POSSE WAS NO QINCH---

THAR'S A WAGON
TRAIN HEADIN' OUT
OF THE TERRITORY RIGHT
NOW! I RECKON I CAN
GET HELP DOWN
THAR!



FIVE MINUTES OF FAST TALK AND I HAD FIFTY MEN BE-
HIND ME---FIFTY MEN MAD AS HORNETS AND ITCHIN' FER
ACTION!

THEM THIEVIN'
COYOTES GOT FIVE
THOUSAND DOLLARS
OF MINE IN THAT
WAGON!

THEY CLEANED
ME OUT, TOO!



WHAT ARE
WE WAITIN' FER?
LET'S GO,
MEN!



WE SWEEPED UP THAT TRAIL LIKE A
PRAIRIE FIRE AND TRAPPED TRACY
AN' HIS BUNCH! THEY WERE STILL
COUNTIN' THEIR HAUL AT THE GOLD
EAGLE PLACER MINE---

IT'S THE HORSE-
MAN AND A POSSE!
WE'RE CORNERED!



TRACY, WHAT'LL
WE DO? WE
HAVEN'T GOT
A CHANCE!

WE'RE NOT
FINISHED YET!
HEAD FOR THAT
NEST OF ROCKS
UP THERE,
BOYS!



AS AN ARMY CAPTAIN, TRACY WAS A PHONEY-- BUT HE SURE KNEW HIS MILITARY TACTICS! THOSE ROCKS MADE A PERFECT FORT!

WE'VE GOTTA FIGGER A WAY OF GETTIN' 'EM OUTA THOSE ROCKS BEFORE NIGHTFALL, OR THEY'LL SLIP AWAY IN THE DARK!

BUT IT'LL BE SUICIDE CLIMBIN' THAT HILL! THEY'LL PICK US OFF LIKE FLIES!

I LOOKED AROUND FOR AN ANSWER-- AND IT HIT ME RIGHT BETWEEN THE EYES!

THAT'S IT!... THE HYDRAULIC PUMPS THEY USE TUH WASH THE GOLD OUTA THE EARTH!

THE TURN OF A VALVE--AND THAT CONSERVED MACHINE LET GO WITH THE ROAR OF A THOUSAND GRIZZLIES!

HOLD THAT HOSE, MEN! THOSE THIEVIN' COYOTES ARE GON-NA GET THE SUR-PRIZE OF THEIR LIVES!

THAT STREAM OF WATER SLICED THROUGH THEIR DEFENSES LIKE A HOT KNIFE THROUGH BUTTER! I COULD ALMOST SEE TRACY AN' KRAGG TURNIN' WHITE AT THE GILLS!

HELP! EEEYAH!

THEY'RE UNDER-MININ' THE ROCKS! WE'RE GOIN' INTO THE RIVER!

H-HELP!

THAT DOES IT, MEN! HERE COME THE RING-LEADERS!

MINUTES LATER WE WERE FISHIN' 'EM OUTA THE DRINK LIKE A PASSEL OF HALF-DROWNED RATS!

THOSE HOMBRES LOOK MIGHTY WET!

THAT'S RIGHT, HORSE-MAN! AN' WE'RE NOT FOR-GETTIN' IT WAS YOU WHO FINALLY SAW THROUGH THEIR SCHEME--AN' GOT US OUR PROPERTY BACK AGAIN!

WAL, AMIGOS, THAT'S HOW IT ENDED! AFTER ALL THE HARM THEY DONE, ROUNDIN' UP THOSE SIDEWINDERS WAS A PURE PLEASURE!

SO LONG PARDNERS! DON'T FERGIT, I'LL BE SEEIN' YUH IN THE NEXT ISSUE-- WITH ANOTHER ONE OF MUH SLAM-BANG STORIES, CROWDED WITH ACTION!

THE END!



**GEE! IT MUST HAVE
TAKEN YEARS TO
LEARN TO PLAY
*LIKE THAT!***



***NOT AT ALL!* I DIDN'T KNOW
A NOTE. YET I STARTED
PLAYING WHOLE PIECES
*RIGHT AWAY!***

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PEACE-LOVIN' BLACKSMITH

LUKE CONNORS RUBBED his stubbly chin with the back of his grimy hand and glinted menacingly around the crowded saloon. "So that new blacksmith's one o' them peace-lovin' birds, eh?" he snorted. "That means he don't belong in THIS town. Reckon I'll mosey over an' boot him on his way!"

The saloon cleared swiftly as a crowd gathered to watch what they hoped would be a real ruckus. There hadn't been one in the lawless town of Coffin Flats for nearly two days. The cowpokes didn't know what to make of the newcomer, Jeff Scott. He was a tall, rawboned man with graying hair, hard, bulging muscles, and steel blue, fearless eyes. But in the week he'd been in Coffin Flats the townsfolk had learned that he was a hard worker, a non-drinker, and a church goer...and, he couldn't be provoked into a fight.

"Why don't you fergit it, Luke?" said one of the older cowpokes. "That feller is just mindin' his own business."

"And you mind YORES!" sputtered Connors, slamming his fist wrist-deep into the cowpoke's soft belly. The stricken man collapsed writhing in the dust.

Jeff Scott had seen the incident from his blacksmith's shop across the way. He felt the crawl of anger along his spine as the crowd approached. In a moment the two men faced each other across the glowing forge. "You shouldn't have done that," said Jeff, with a strong effort to keep his voice clam. "That man didn't mean no harm."

Luke Connors threw his head back and laughed. The men who knew him best shuddered. It was a wicked laugh, the kind they had heard just before Luke shot down the young Phillips brothers. Suddenly the laugh stopped, with chilling abruptness. "They say yuh won't fight," sneered Connors, "an' I see yuh don't pack shootin' irons. You skeered o' gunplay?"

"No," said Jeff slowly. "But I've learned that lead slingin' never settles

anything. I aim to live in this town WITHOUT carryin' guns...peacefully!"

"That's what YOU think, pardner!" roared Luke. "But you're gettin' out o' this town, PRONTO!" Jeff pursed his lips and met Connors' fierce gray eyes. Suddenly, Luke whipped both pistols from his holsters and pointed to a can in the middle of the street. "Yuh see that?" he shouted. "Now watch, and then...VA-MOOSE!" Six shots rang out, each followed instantly by the clang of lead against tin. The men whistled softly as the can kicked and sputtered across the road. "That's SHOOTIN!" said Connors with a self-satisfied smirk. "Only one man in this territory can match that, and his name's LIGHTNIN' SMITH, the ex-sheriff o' Tombstone, but nobody's seen him in these parts fer years!"

"I heard about HIM," said one of the old-timers. "But Smith not only could MATCH that...he could hit a silver dollar six times after tossin' it in the air!" The men howled. "That's just TALK," said one. "Nobody here ever SEEN Smith in action!"

"I did," Everyone whirled as Jeff calmly fetched a silver dollar from his pocket. "Will anybody lend me a six-shooter?" It was quickly produced. The men watched hypnotized as the silver dollar spun into the sun. BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG! The shots split the hushed air like the lash of a bullwhip. When the coin dropped into the dust the men gathered quickly around to stare at the twisted bit of metal. "Crimpin' coyotes!" they chorused.

Suddenly Jeff grabbed Connors by the throat. "YOU'RE the one who's gettin' out o' town...and it better be FAST! And remember, LIGHTNIN' SMITH means whut he says, only now he calls himself JEFF SCOTT!"

The incredibly swift punch sent Luke reeling into the dust. He got up slowly, glanced swiftly at the doubled fists of the blacksmith, and started running for dear life.

DANGER STALKED ALONG THE RIDGES AND DEATH LURKED IN EVERY VALLEY! REDMAN HUNTED REDMAN IN THE BITTER, DEADLY FEUDS THAT WERE KILLING OFF THE BRAVEST WARRIORS AND THREATENED TO WIPE THE PROUDEST INDIAN TRIBES FROM THE FACE OF THE EARTH! SOMEONE HAD TO CALL A HALT TO THE TERRIBLE SLAUGHTER...AND THAT SOMEONE WAS...

JOHNNY INJUN!

YIP-YIP!
 EEE-YIIIIIIII!

THE PEIGAN WAR CRY!
 IT'S...JOHNNY
 INJUN!



JOHNNY INJUN! THE OLD WEST RANG WITH THE FAME OF THE ORPHANED WHITE BOY WHOM THE INDIANS HAD RAISED! BUT THE ONE MAN WHO KNEW THE BOY'S TRUE WORTH AS A TRUSTED WARRIOR WAS JOHNNY'S FOSTER-FATHER, RUNNING DEER, CHIEF OF THE PEIGANS!

MY SON, BY THE WILL OF THE GREAT WHITE FATHER, I AND MY WARRIORS MUST RIDE TO FORT LINCOLN TO TALK PEACE WITH THE CROWS!

PEACE WITH THE CROWS? BUT THEY ARE OUR SWORN ENEMIES. MY FATHER!



TRUE, THE CROWS HAVE BAD HEARTS AGAINST US! BUT EACH YEAR, THE WARPATH COSTS BOTH SIDES MANY FINE WARRIORS! IF WE DO NOT MAKE PEACE WITH EACH OTHER, THE RED MAN WILL SOON DESTROY HIMSELF!

MY FATHER SPEAKS WITH WISDOM! YET, THE CROWS ARE NEVER SO DANGEROUS AS WHEN THEY TALK OF PEACE!



TRUE, MY SON! THAT IS WHY I LEAVE YOU AND THE YOUNGER BRAVES TO GUARD OUR CAMP! SHOULD THERE BE TROUBLE, YOU WILL HAVE OLD WHITE HORSE, THE MEDICINE MAN, TO ADVISE YOU!

WE WILL GUARD THE VILLAGE WITH OUR LIVES, FATHER!



AS THE CHIEF'S FOSTER-SON, JOHNNY BORE GREAT RESPONSIBILITIES! ONE OF THEM WAS TO FEED THE PEIGAN CAMP IN HIS FATHER'S ABSENCE! AND SO THE YOUNG BRAVE LED A BUFFALO HUNT...

WE SHOULD GET PLENTY OF MEAT FOR THE CAMP FROM THIS HERD!

PERHAPS, BUT THE BUFFALO ARE RESTLESS! IT'S ALMOST AS IF THEY'D BEEN HUNTED TODAY!



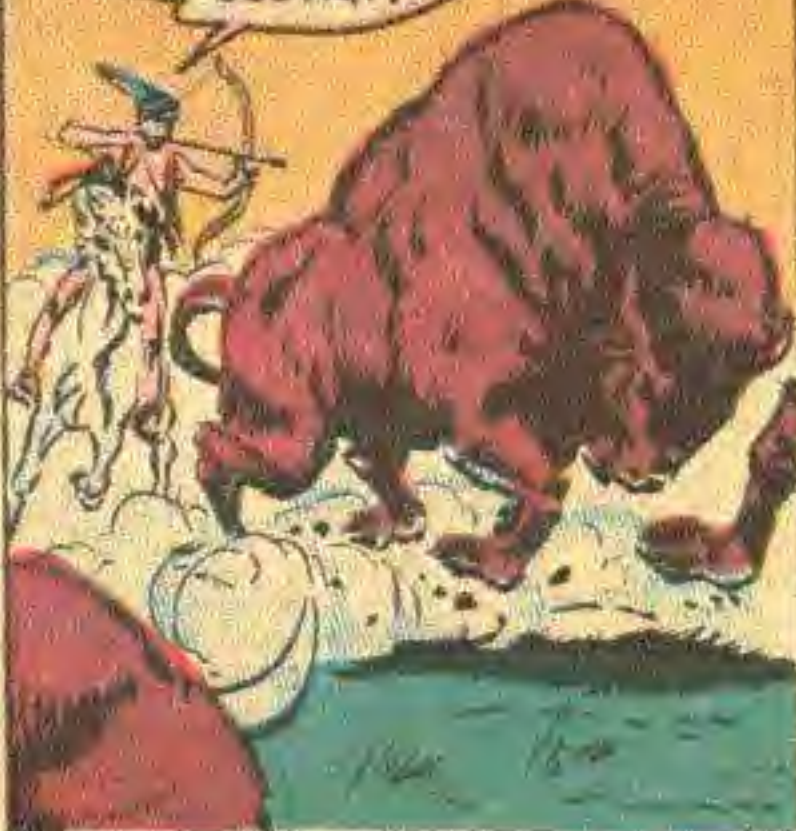
HOW IS THAT POSSIBLE? OUR BRAVES HAVE NOT HUNTED BUFFALO FOR WEEKS!

THERE MAY BE STRANGERS ON OUR HUNTING GROUNDS! WE WILL HAVE TO STAY ALERT!



THE WAS TROUBLE IN THE AIR... BUT JOHNNY'S TASK WAS TO BRING MEAT BACK TO THE PEIGAN VILLAGE!

A FINE, FAT COW! BUT SHE RUNS SLOWLY!



GOOD HUNTING, JOHNNY! THERE WILL BE FEASTING IN THE VILLAGE TONIGHT!



IT HAD TAKEN JOHNNY BUT ONE ARROW TO KILL THE BUFFALO! BUT A MOMENT LATER, HIS SHARP EYE SPOTTED A SECOND FEATHERED SHAFT!

A CROW ARROW! THEN THAT IS WHY THE COW RAN SO SLOWLY!

WITH THE CROWS ON OUR HUNTING GROUNDS, IT IS NO WONDER THAT THE BUFFALOS WERE RESTLESS!



THE CROWS MAY COME TO SEEK THEIR KILL! WE WILL HIDE FROM SIGHT AND LIE IN WAIT FOR THEM!

GOOD! THIS DAY WE SHALL COUNT COUP ON OUR ENEMIES!



SURE ENOUGH, THE CROW WARRIORS SHOWED UP SOON AFTERWARD! BUT AS THEY PREPARED TO BUTCHER THE FALLEN COW...

PEIGAN BRAVES! WE ARE SUR-ROUNDED!

STAND WHERE YOU ARE... OR OUR ARROWS CUT YOU DOWN!



THE CROWS PLEADED FOR MERCY...
THEIR EYES SHIFTING ABOUT LIKE
THOSE OF TRAPPED SNAKES...

MY LITTLE PEIGAN BROTHERS
---YOU WILL NOT HARM US? WE
WERE JOURNEYING TO THE
PEACE COUNCIL WHEN WE
RAN OUT OF FOOD! THAT IS
WHY WE ENTERED YOUR
HUNTING GROUNDS!

YOUR
PUNISHMENT
DOES NOT
LIE IN OUR
HANDS! WHITE
HORSE, THE
PEIGAN MEDICINE
MAN, SHALL DECIDE
YOUR FATE!

OLD WHITE HORSE WAS WISE IN
THE EVIL WAYS OF THE CROWS! AND
THE PEIGAN LAWS WERE HARSH!

OUR ENEMIES, THE
CROWS, HAVE TRESPASSED
ON OUR HUNTING GROUNDS!
BY OUR LAWS, DEATH
IS THE PENALTY!

WAIT! IN
THE NAME OF
RUNNING
DEER, MY
FATHER, I
WISH TO
SPEAK!

THOUGH JOHNNY WAS YOUNG, HIS DAR-
ING EXPLOITS WERE MANY! THE
PEIGANS LISTENED RESPECTFULLY...

WE ALL KNOW THERE MUST BE
PEACE AMONG THE TRIBES
IF THE RED MAN IS TO SUR-
VIVE! EVEN NOW RUNNING
DEER IS AT FORT LINCOLN,
HOPING TO MAKE PEACE
WITH THE CROW NATION!
IF THESE HUNTERS ARE
SLAIN, ALL HOPE OF FRIEND-
SHIP WILL END!



THE SON OF RUNNING DEER SPEAKS
WISELY! HE WILL MAKE A GREAT CHIEF
SOMEDAY! LET THE CROW HUNTERS
DEPART IN PEACE!

BUT TO THE CROWS, THE PEIGAN'S
MERCY WAS A SIGN OF WEAKNESS!
AS THEY LEFT THE CAMP...

SEE THE FINE
HORSES THEY
HAVE, MY
BROTHERS!

IT IS A PITY!
SUCH ANIMALS
ARE TOO GOOD
FOR THESE SOFT-
HEARTED
SQUAWS!

OUR ENEMIES HAVE BROUGHT
MUCH SHAME ON US TODAY! BUT
I THINK I KNOW A WAY TO RE-
PAY THEM WELL!
TONIGHT WE WILL
RETURN TO STEAL
THEIR HORSES!

IT SHOULD
BE EASY, MY
BROTHER--
WITH ONLY A
FEW BOYS
GUARDING
THE HERD!



THE
CROWS
WERE THE
MOST ADEPT
HORSE
THIEVES ON
THE PLAINS
---AND THAT
NIGHT THEY
PROVED
THEIR SKILL
ONCE MORE!
IN DEADLY
SILENCE,
THEY
CLUBBED
THE
GUARDS...



--- AND LED THE PEIGAN HERD INTO THE DARKNESS!

FIVE HUNDRED HORSES!--
AND THE PEIGAN CAMP STILL
SLEEPS!

THIS WILL MAKE
A LAUGHING STOCK
OF THEM!





BY THE TIME JOHNNY RETURNED, HE HAD HIS PLAN READY... A PLAN WHOSE DARING WAS WORTHY OF A PEIGAN BRAVE!

THE HORSES ARE TETHERED BETWEEN US AND THE CAMP OF THE CROWS! IF WE CAN STAMPEDE THE HERD TOWARD THAT CAMP...

THEN THE CANYON WILL BE A DEATH TRAP FOR THOSE THIEVING SNAKES! WE UNDERSTAND, JOHNNY!

IN DEAD SILENCE, THEY SLIPPED INTO THE CANYON...

THERE ARE NO GUARDS... THE CROWS THINK THEY ARE SAFE FROM DISCOVERY!

REMEMBER, WE MUST FRIGHTEN THE HORSES BADLY ENOUGH SO THAT THEY'LL BOLT!

A SHRILL WHISTLE, THE FLAP OF A BLANKET, AND THEN THE BLOOD-CURDLING WAR CRY OF THE PEIGANS! IN SECONDS THE HERD WAS STAMPEDING!

KI-YI-YIIIIII!

MAD WITH TERROR, THE HORSES TORE LOOSE, CHARGED DOWN ON THE CROW CAMP!

THE HORSES! THEY'RE STAMPEDING!

CLIMB THE CANYON WALLS! GET TO THOSE LEDGES! IT'S OUR ONLY CHANCE!

THE HERD ROARED PAST... BUT WHEN THE TREMBLING CROWS DESCENDED ONCE MORE, JOHNNY AND HIS BRAVES WERE WAITING!

WHAT CAN IT BE THAT FRIGHTENS OUR CROW FRIENDS SO?

THE CROWS ARE BRAVE ONLY WHEN IT COMES TO STEALING HORSES UNDER THE COVER OF NIGHT! THEY LOSE THEIR COURAGE WHEN THEY FACE THE PEIGAN ARROWS!

WE HAVE DONE WELL, MY BROTHERS! OUR FATHERS WILL BE PROUD TO HEAR HOW WE DEFEATED THE CROWS!

BUT JOHNNY, WHAT OF THE HORSES? THAT STAMPEDE MUST HAVE SCATTERED THEM FOR MILES!



NO! THE HORSES ARE NOT LOST! COME WITH ME AND BRING THE CAPTIVES...I HAVE SOMETHING TO SHOW YOU!



THIS CANYON ENDS IN A BLANK WALL! I SAW THAT WHEN I SCOUTED THE RIMROCK! I KNEW THE HORSES WOULD BE TRAPPED DOWN THERE!

YOU PLAN WELL, JOHNNY INJUN! WE ARE PROUD TO HAVE YOU LEAD US!



WITH FALSE COURAGE, THE CROWS TRIED TO BLUFF THEIR CAPTORS, BUT...

AND WHAT DO YOU PLAN TO DO WITH US? IF YOU MEAN TO KILL US, GO AHEAD! WE ARE NOT AFRAID TO DIE!

YOU ARE NOT WORTHY TO DIE BY A PEIGAN ARROW! WE HAVE OTHER PLANS FOR YOU, MY FRIENDS!



BACK AT FORT LINCOLN, THE CROW CHIEFTAINS HAD BEEN SHOWING THEIR TRUE COLORS! WITH THE PEACE TREATY WRITTEN, THEY REFUSED TO SIGN...

LOOK, MY BROTHERS, HOW RUNNING DEER AND HIS PEIGANS BEG FOR PEACE! HAVE WE NOT ALWAYS SAID THAT THE PEIGANS ARE BUT SQUAWS AND COWARDS?

THE CROW CHIEF LIES! MY PEOPLE HAVE NEVER BEEN AFRAID TO MEET THE CROWS ON THE WARPATH!



TEMPERS WERE FLARING WHEN THE FORT GATE BURST OPEN AND...

IT IS JOHNNY INJUN, SON OF RUNNING DEER! AND THOSE PRISONERS WITH HIM ARE CROWS!



BRIEFLY, PROUDLY, JOHNNY TOLD HIS STORY! THEN...

...THEN WHEN THESE CROW THIEVES STOLE OUR HORSES, I AND THE OTHERS HUNTED THEM DOWN LIKE THE COYOTES THEY ARE!

THOSE WARRIORS WERE AMONG THE BEST OF MY PEOPLE!

JOHNNY'S EXPLOIT WAS TOO MUCH FOR THE CROW CHIEFS...

IF A MERE PEIGAN BOY CAN OUTSMART AND OUTFIGHT OUR BEST WARRIORS, THEN IT IS BETTER THAT WE SIGN THE PEACE!

AND MAY THE CROWS AND PEIGANS LIVE IN FRIENDSHIP!

YES, ONCE MORE JOHNNY INJUN HAD WON THROUGH! ONCE AGAIN HE HAD PROVED HIS RIGHT TO BE CALLED THE BRAVEST WARRIOR AMONG THE PEIGANS!



WATCH FOR JOHNNY INJUN IN OUR NEXT ISSUE! HE'LL BE THRILLING YOU AGAIN IN A BRAND-NEW, DANGER-PACKED, HARD-RIDING ADVENTURE!



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YOUR KEEN SENSES PICK UP THE HORSEMAN'S TRAIL AT ONCE! ALL THROUGH THE NIGHT, YOU FOLLOW THE SCENT! MORNING FINDS YOU DEEP IN THE BADLANDS--



DANGER HAUNTS EVERY MILE OF THE TRAIL! YOU PASS A HERD OF JAVELINAS--THE MURDEROUS WILD PIGS OF THE SOUTHWEST--



WISE IN THE LORE OF THE WILD, YOU KNOW THOSE TUSKED DEVILS ARE BORN KILLERS--SO YOU GIVE THEM THE SLIP!



IT'S SOON AFTERWARD THAT YOU HIT THE TRAIL'S END! YOU SPOT THE HORSEMAN--AND YOUR WORST FEARS ARE REALIZED! HE'S BOUND--A PRISONER!

WE KNEW YOU'D BE A-COMIN' AFTER US FER ROBBIN' THAT OLD SOURDOUGH--SO WE SET A TRAP FER YUH! AN' YUH'RE NOT GETTIN' OUT OF IT ALIVE, HORSE-MAN!



YOUR BLOOD SEETHES WITH A TERRIBLE HATRED! YET YOU'VE LEARNED ENOUGH OF MAN'S WAYS TO KNOW THAT YOU CANNOT ATTACK--OR THOSE GUNS WOULD CUT YOU DOWN!



SO YOU CHOKE DOWN YOUR GROWL AND THINK--THINK DEEP BACK IN YOUR SKULL WHERE THE CUNNING OF YOUR WOLF-LIKE ANCESTORS IS HIDDEN!



THEN SOMETHING STIRS IN YOUR MEMORY! THE JAVELINAS! ONCE YOU HAD SEEN THOSE TUSKED KILLERS TACKLE A GRIZZLY--AND TREE HIM!



NOW THERE'S ENOUGH SAVVY IN YOUR CANINE HEAD TO FIGURE THAT THOSE WILD PIGS MIGHT BE ABLE TO HELP YOU! YOU RACE BACK UP THE TRAIL, A HALF-FORMED PLAN IN YOUR BRAIN--



YOU FIND THE JAVELINAS AND DARE THEM TO CHARGE YOU... KNOWING THAT WHEN ENRAGED ENOUGH, THEY'LL FOLLOW YOU FOR MILES!



THEN YOU STAY JUST AHEAD OF THEIR SLASHING TUSKS AS YOU LURE THEM DOWN THE TRAIL...



WITH THOSE GRUNTING DEVILS CHASING YOU, YOU HEAD FOR THE HORSEMAN AND HIS CAPTORS!



ONE SET OF ENEMIES IS GONE, BUT ANOTHER IS THUNDERING DOWN ON THE HELPLESS HORSEMAN! ONCE MORE THE CHIPS ARE DOWN! ONCE MORE YOU LAY YOUR LIFE ON THE LINE AS YOU FACE THOSE SLASHING TUSKS!



IT LOOKS LIKE ONLY A MIRACLE CAN SAVE YOU AND THE HORSEMAN... BUT THEN THAT MIRACLE HAPPENS! THE JAVELINAS SPOT EASIER PREY!



YOUR GAMBLE HAS WON, BUT YOU'VE STILL SOME FAST WORK TO DO...



NOW ALL WE HAVE TO DO IS PICK UP THE RIFLES THOSE HOMBRES DROPPED, AND THEN WAIT UNTIL THE PORKERS GET TIRED OF TRYIN' TO CHAW DOWN THAT TREE!



AND THEN YOUR MIGHTY HEART POUNDING WITH PRIDE, YOU TROT ALONG BESIDE THE HORSEMAN AS HE HERDS HIS PRISONERS BACK TO TOWN! ONCE AGAIN YOU'VE FACED DANGER AT THE HODDED HORSEMAN'S SIDE... AND ONCE AGAIN YOU'VE SEEN IT THROUGH... TOGETHER!



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ROUNDUP TIME

GREETINGS, pardners! Sashay in, unhitch yore gun belts, put yore feet on the table and let's celebrate! The reason? Do we need a reason when all you readers, all you loyal fans of "*The Hooded Horseman*" come calling? No sir! Just settle back, and let's have a good old-fashioned talk fest! And since we editors are hosts, mind if we pick a subject for discussion? Here it is—two letters which we received relative to this great magazine of yours and ours. Here they are—and we'll save our comment on them until you've had time to digest them thoroughly.

"Dear Editor:—

Love that '*Hooded Horseman*'! It's the best western I've ever read, bar none. Great stories and drawings both—and the characters are truly wonderful. I like the line you gave the '*Hooded Horseman*'—he's the first guy with a mask that seems human! And a separate story for Flash, his dog, is fine by me. '*Johnny Injun*' is a good piece straight out of history, and I go for its Indian lore. And that '*Cowboy Sahib*' shows smart thinking by the editors, I'd say—it's the most different western I've ever read! Congratulations—and keep up the good work!

—Henry R. Babboni, Chicago, Ill."

"Dear Editor:—

I've just read my first issue of '*The Hooded Horseman*'. I find your mag interesting enough, but I've got a beef. What ever has happened to the good, old-fashioned western? They used to have heroes who could whip their weight in wildcats and shoot out a gnat's eye a mile away. Your characters just don't seem that way at all. And I like my stuff out west, where it belongs. Why ring in India—like you do in '*Cowboy Sahib*'?

—Marvin Beall, New York, N. Y."

All set? Okay! Well, getting a letter like that first one sure does things for your Editors—because here's a guy who understands what we're trying to do. We're striving for human characters—for the type of heroes that, under certain circumstances, could be you, me or the guy next door—people who live and breathe, that we can latch onto.

That's what makes the *Hooded Horseman* himself not just another unbelievable waddy in a mask. As for *Flash*—well, it seems a darned interesting thing to be able to see the world through the eyes of this loyal, fighting dog, and learn what makes him tick. Proceeding further, there's nothing quite so fascinating as authentic Indian lore—and it's a great thing to be able to present it in as interesting a story framework as "*Johnny Injun*" possesses. As for "*Cowboy Sahib*", blessings on reader Babboni, who saw right to the heart of the problem, and realized that what we were trying to introduce into the familiar western setting was a brand-new and challenging locale which would truly intrigue the reading public.

And now for reader Beall, whose criticisms, being sincere, are thoroughly welcome. If "good, old-fashioned western" means an accent on wooden and artificial heroes, that's not what we're after here. Yes, we want real fighting men, men who can give a good account of themselves against odds—but we've observed that the public is getting pretty tired of fairytales. Go back over the western heroes who actually lived—men like Buffalo Bill, Bat Masterson, Wyatt Earp. Nobody would ever doubt their prowess—but we've got our serious doubts about any one of them shooting out a gnat's eye a mile away, or single-handedly and in one engagement polishing off 516 Indians plus 477 badmen.

And so we'll continue to be responsive to our readers' intelligence. Our heroes will be he-men, waddies who can give a good account of themselves under any circumstances—not incredible stuffed dummies. We'll put them into stories that have the breath of life and high adventure about them—stories which we're convinced you'll like. But our success, in the final analysis, must always rest upon your reactions! So write and tell us how you like what we're doing, please! Address your letters to The Editor, "*Hooded Horseman*", 45 West 45th Street, New York 36, N. Y.

IN THE TEEMING SUB-CONTINENT OF INDIA, PLAGUED BY WILD BEASTS AND JUNGLE DISEASE, HAUNTED BY AGE-OLD FEAR AND SUPERSTITIONS, LAND OF UNTOLD WEALTH AND DARK MYSTERIES, THE NAME OF COWBOY SAHIB HAS BECOME A LEGEND TO RIVAL THE ANCIENT SAGAS! HOW AN AMERICAN BOMBER PILOT WON A REMOTE EMPIRE FROM A CRUEL SULTAN IN A GRIM POKER GAME HAS LONG SINCE BECOME HISTORY-- BUT THE ENDLESS STRUGGLE GOES ON! HERE, READER, IS ONE OF COWBOY SAHIB'S GREATEST ADVENTURES!



THREE
TIGERS--THREE
BULLETS! AN
AMPLE TEST OF
HIS PROWESS!

JUMPIN'
BLUE BLAZES!
A FELLER COULD
GET KILT THIS
WAY!

PARIJUNA, AN EMPIRE ON THE REMOTE
NORTHERN BORDERS OF INDIA --
THE COURT OF JOE KING --

OUR PEOPLE REJOICE IN YOUR
RULE, COWBOY SAHIB! YOUR
IMPROVEMENTS IN OUR
ANCIENT AGRICULTURAL
METHODS HAVE BANISHED
HUNGER FROM OUR LAND!
EXACTLY ONE YEAR HAS
PASSED SINCE THE THRONE
BECAME YOURS, AND THE
TIME HAS COME FOR THE
PEOPLE TO PAY TRIBUTE.

TRIBUTE?
I DON'T
SAVVY WHAT
YUH MEAN,
KRISHNA!

KRISHNA, THE MINISTER OF STATE, LED
COWBOY JOE KING OUTSIDE, WHERE
AN IMMENSE THROG CHEERED WILDLY--

HAIL
COWBOY
SAHIB!

SHUCKS, KRISHNA, JEST
BECAUSE I'VE TAUGHT
YUH ALL A LITTLE
WYOMING KNOW-HOW
AIN'T NO CAUSE TUH
GO PLUMB LOCO!

YOU KNOW
NOT THE
MISERY THAT WE
SUFFERED UNDER
PREVIOUS RULERS!
NOW, MASTER, WOULD
YOU STAND UPON
ONE OF THE SCALES
SO THAT WE MAY
DETERMINE
THE TRIBUTE?



JOE KING HAD LEARNED MUCH OF BAFFLING INDIAN CUSTOMS, BUT THIS WAS SOMETHING NEW--

HEAR, O PEOPLE OF LARIJUNA! COWBOY SAHIB'S WEIGHT IS 174 POUNDS PLUS 7½ OUNCES.

SIMMERIN' SAGEBRUSH! ALL THIS SETTIN' AROUND LATELY'S BEEN PUTTIN' LAZY FAT ON ME!



NEXT MOMENT, THE LOYAL SUBJECTS BEGAN EMPTYING BAGS OF JEWELS ON THE OTHER SCALE! DIAMONDS, EMERALDS, RUBIES AND PEARLS!

HOPPIN' HORNED TOADS, KRISHNA! WHAT'S GOIN' ON?

IT IS OUR AGE-OLD CUSTOM OF PAYING TAXES, GREAT ONE-- TO MATCH THE WEIGHT OF OUR RULER ONCE A YEAR!



COWBOY JOE PROTESTED, BUT--

YOU MUST ACCEPT, MASTER-- IT IS THE WILL OF OUR GRATEFUL PEOPLE!

WAL, SEEN' AS HOW YUH FEEL-- BUT I'LL USE IT TUH IMPORT GOOD TEXAS LONGHORNS AN' GRAINS TUH IMPROVE THE NATIVE BREED HERE! TELL THE PEOPLE MUH DECISION.



SEVERAL DAYS LATER, COWBOY SAHIB CALLED UPON THE ROYAL JEWELER TO PICK UP AN EXACT DUPLICATE OF THE MYSTIC RING OF EMPIRE WHICH HE ALWAYS WORE--

IS THE ONLY DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE TWO THAT THE REAL ONE HAS THIS TINY INDIAN INSCRIPTION ON THE UNDERSIDE?

YES, I HAVE DONE AS YOU COMMANDED, GREAT ONE-- AND THIS SECRET WILL NEVER PASS MY LIPS!



WITH THE FALSE RING IN HIS POCKET, JOE KING FELT SAFER! FOR A SERIES OF DESPERATE MEN HAD TRIED TO WREST THE TRUE ONE FROM HIM, AND WITH IT THE RIGHT TO RULE LARIJUNA! WEEKS PASSED AND ALL WENT WELL! AND THEN ONE DAY, A DIRE TALE OF A STRANGE DISEASE WHICH WAS RAVAGING THE HERDS AT THE NORTHERN BOUNDARIES OF LARIJUNA--

NOT ONLY THE CATTLE SICKEN AND DIE, COWBOY SAHIB, BUT SHEEP AND WILD MOUNTAIN GOATS FALL TOO!

I RECKON THIS CALLS FOR A PUSSONAL LOOK-SEE! I'LL SADDLE MUH HORSE RAJAH AN' GIT GOIN'!



SOON AFTERWARDS--

SHUCKS, FELLERS, I DON'T NEED A BODYGUARD FOR THIS JOB!

THE NORTHERN BOUNDARIES OF LARIJUNA ARE VAGUE, MASTER! IT IS BORDERED THERE BY SANKARA, A GREAT EMPIRE CLOSED TO OUTSIDERS! THEY ARE WILD AND SAVAGE PEOPLE-- MUCH TO BE FEARED!



UP AND UP INTO THE MOUNTAINS THEY WENT, INTO EVEN WILDER AND MORE INACCESSIBLE COUNTRY, UNTIL A DEAD STEER WAS SIGHTED! COWBOY SAHIB'S SUNBURNED FACE PALED AND HIS LIPS WERE SET TIGHT--

THERE'S NO MISTAKIN' THE SIGNS! THIS CRITTUR DIED OF THE HOOF AND MOUTH DISEASE! WE DON'T HAVE A MINUTE TUH SPARE--WE'VE GOT TUH SHOOT EVERY COW AN' STEER IN SIGHT AN' BURY 'EM UNDER A COAT OF LYE!





SOON AFTERWARDS, A LARGE HERD OF CATTLE WAS SPOTTED IN THE FAR DISTANCE---



HE RODE OFF TO THE SOUND OF GUN-FIRE AND THE PITIFUL LOWING OF DYING CATTLE. MINUTES LATER, HE HEARD ANOTHER FLURRY OF SHOTS FROM BEHIND---AS IF A PITCHED BATTLE WAS BEING FOUGHT!



THE AIR WAS STILL AS THE MIGHTY STALLION RAJAH FINALLY REACHED THE SPOT! THEN---



NEVER ABLE TO PULL HIS GUNS, HIS FISTS WERE A DEADLY DUO UNTIL SHEER NUMBERS OVERWHELMED HIM! THEN---



OKAY, YUH SIDEWINDERS! WHY DON'T YUH SHOOT ME LIKE YUH DID MUH MEN?

DO YOU NOT THINK WE HAVE HEARD OF THE GREAT COWBOY SAHIB? OUR RULER WILL BE PLEASED AT HAVING CAPTURED YOU ALIVE!

BOUND SECURELY BY THE SAVAGE-LOOKING NOWADS, COWBOY SAHIB HAD BUT ONE THOUGHT IN MIND---



GOOD THING I HAD THE FALSE RING IN MUH BACK POCKET! THIS WAY I CAN SLIP THE REAL ONE OFF EVEN NOW!

AFTER A HARD TWO-DAY RIDE, AN UNBELIEVABLY MAGNIFICENT PALACE CAME INTO VIEW---



WAL, I'LL BE SWITCHED! IT'S MIGHTY PURTY--- SHORE HOPE I KIN CONVINCE YORE KING ABOUT ACTIN' FAST ON THE PLAGUE!

FOOL! BEFORE ANOTHER DAY PASSES, IT WILL NOT MATTER-- TO YOU!

THROUGH FABULOUSLY BEAUTIFUL GARDENS AND COURTYARDS HE WAS PUSHED, UNTIL FINALLY-- HE CAME BEFORE THE THRONE OF THE RULER! THERE---



SUFFERIN' SASSAFRAS! IT--IT CAN'T BE!

HERE HE IS, HIGHNESS--- COWBOY SAHIB! WE CAUGHT HIS MEN SLAUGHTERING OUR CATTLE!

QUEEN RANI, ABSOLUTE RULER OF THE FIERCE SANKARANS, SMILED IN CRUEL ANTICIPATION---



LOOK, MA'AM, SEEIN' AS HOW YUH'RE THE BOSS OF THIS OUTFIT--- I HANKER TUH EXPLAIN ABOUT THEM CRITTURS---

SILENCE, FOOL-- BEFORE I ORDER, YOU LASHED LIKE A COMMON CRIMINAL! FOR TRESPASSING ON MY DOMAIN AND DESTROYING ROYAL PROPERTY, YOUR PUNISHMENT SHALL BE FITTING!

(CONTINUED ON PAGE AFTER NEXT)

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I HAVE HEARD OF YOUR EXPLOITS EVEN HERE IN MY REMOTE EMPIRE--AND IT IS MY WILL THAT YOU PROVE YOURSELF! REMOVE THE RING HE WEARS, GUARDS, FOR IT ENTITLES ME TO RULE LARIJUNA--THEN TAKE HIM AWAY TO THE DUNGEON, UNTIL HIS EXECUTION IS ARRANGED! IT SHALL PROVIDE US WITH AN INTERESTING SPECTACLE!



IN A DANK AND GRIMY CELL, NEXT DAY---

SHORE WAS TOUGH SLEEPIN' WITH MUH ARMS TIED THIS WAY! WAL, NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS TUH ME, THAT SHE-DEVIL WON'T GIT LARIJUNA! NOT WITH THAT PHONEY RING SHE'S GOT!



ON YOUR FEET, PRISONER--YOUR TIME HAS COME!

DOWN A DARK PASSAGEWAY, WHILE THE SOUND OF MANY VOICES DREW NEAR--- THEN, INTO DAZZLING SUNLIGHT---



REMOVE HIS BONDS, GUARDS-- AND LEAD HIM FORWARD!

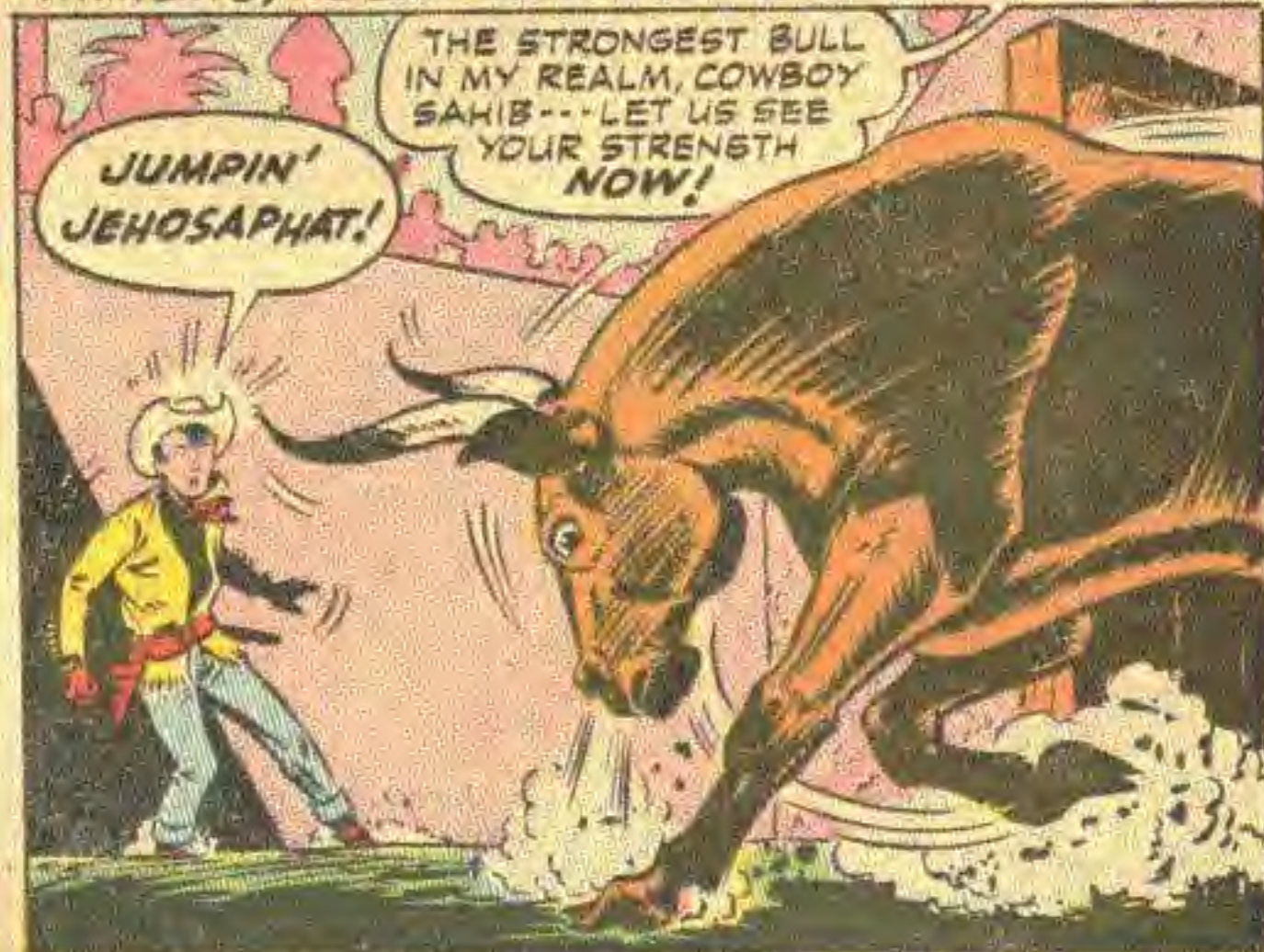
JUMPIN' JUNIPER!

MANY RUMORS HAVE COME TO US CONCERNING YOU, PRISONER--AND I MEAN TO JUDGE FOR MYSELF! PREPARE TO DEFEND YOURSELF!



I'M BETTIN' YUH'RE SET TUH ENJOY THIS!

SUDDENLY, THERE WAS A GREAT SHOUT FROM THE EAGER SPECTATORS, AND A GATE OPENED BEHIND HIM! WHIRLING, HE SAW TO HIS HORROR---



JUMPIN' JEHOSEPHAT!

THE STRONGEST BULL IN MY REALM, COWBOY SAHIB---LET US SEE YOUR STRENGTH NOW!

YES, HE'D WRESTLED MANY A STEER IN HIS LIFE---BUT NEVER ANYTHING LIKE THIS! AS THE MADDENED BULL CHARGED, HE KNEW ONLY THAT IT WAS FIGHT OR DIE! IT WAS THEN THAT RANGE-SHARPENED INSTINCTS TOOK OVER--CAUSING HIM TO LEAP AT THE LAST INSTANT FROM THE MONSTER'S PATH AND SEIZE THE MIGHTY HORNS---

IT WAS AN EPIC STRUGGLE, SUCH AS NEVER WAS SEEN IN ALL THE LONG HISTORY OF INDIA! AGAIN AND AGAIN, THE JUGGERNAUT CHARGED AROUND THE ARENA WITH ITS HUMAN BURDEN, BUT IT COULD NEVER FREE ITSELF FROM THE POWERFUL ARMS WHICH CLUNG TENACIOUSLY TO ITS HORNS! AT LAST, THE VICIOUS BEAST WEAKENED, ITS HEAD TWISTING UNDER THE POWER OF ITS DESPERATE ADVERSARY---

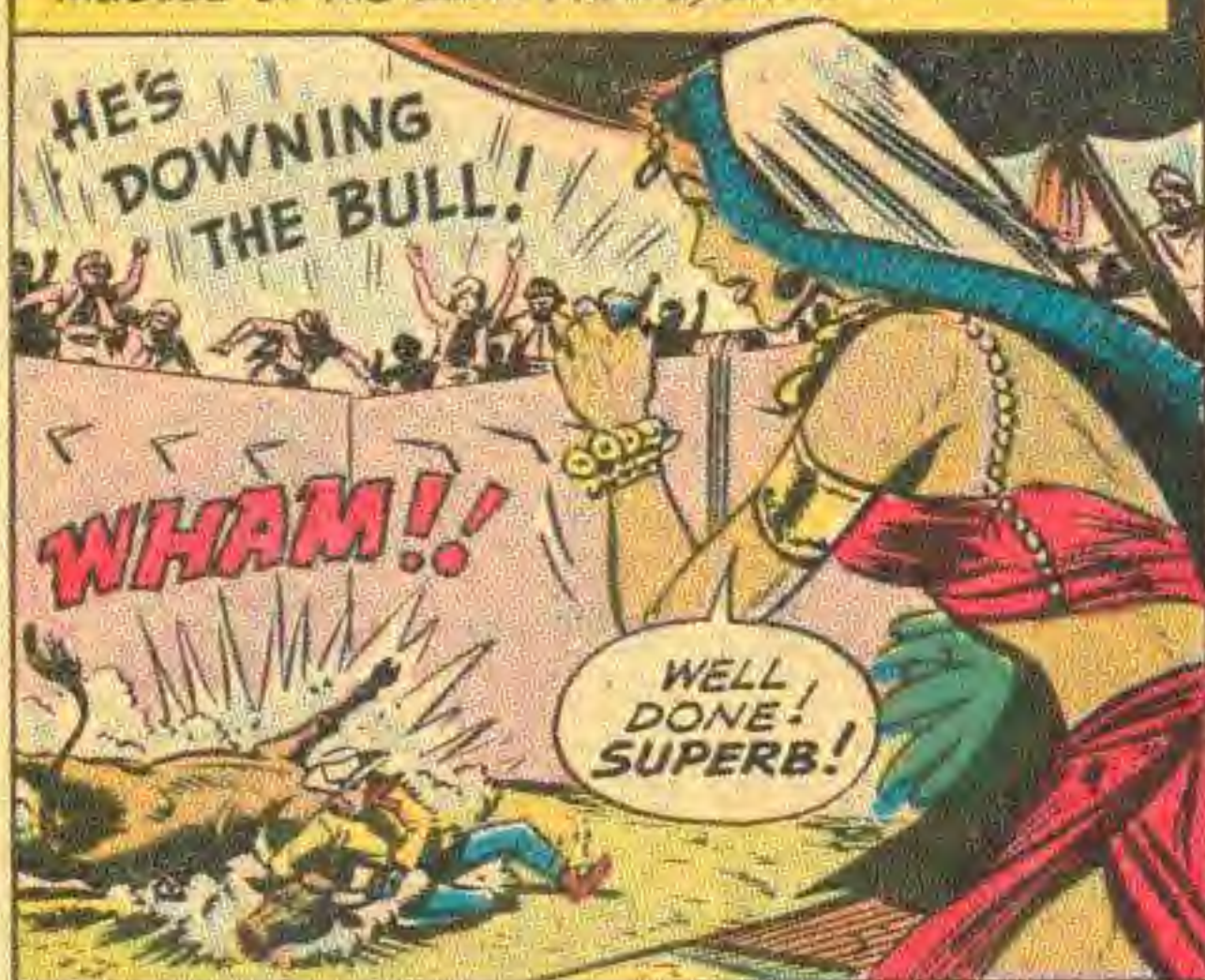


GOT TUH --HOLD ON--



I'M--- GITTIN' THE VARMIN'T--

HARDER AND HARDER, USING EVERY SINEW AND MUSCLE OF HIS LEAN FRAME, UNTIL ---



GROGGILY, HIS EVERY NERVE FRAYED BY THE FANTASTIC ORDEAL, COWBOY SAHIB GOT TO HIS FEET! BUT THE CRUEL QUEEN'S QUEST FOR EXCITEMENT WAS NOT YET SLAKED ---



THREE BULLETS---TO BRING DOWN THREE 600-POUND TIGERS! BUT COMPARED TO THE PREVIOUS STRUGGLE, THIS WAS CHILD'S PLAY---



THE CROWD WENT WILD, INCLUDING THE SAVAGE RANI HERSELF ---



SOON AFTERWARDS--IN THE ROYAL CHAMBERS---



AS SOON AS THEY WERE ALONE, RANI'S ATTITUDE CHANGED! SHE SMILED--AND DREW CLOSE, WITH ADMIRATION IN HER EYES!



THANK YUH KINDLY, MA'AM-- BUT I DON'T AIM TUH HITCH UP WITH A GAL THAT JEST TRIED TUH KILL ME!

FOOL, I OFFER YOU A KINGDOM FAR GREATER THAN LARIJUNA-- AND DO NOT FORGET THAT NOW I POSSESS THE RIGHT TO LARIJUNA'S THRONE!





IT SEEMED HOPELESS, BUT NOW THAT HIS HANDS WERE FREE, THERE WAS A WAY TO ESCAPE--- WHICH CALLED FOR DARING AND SPLIT-SECOND TIMING! HE WAITED TILL LONG PAST MID-NIGHT, AND THEN---



CAREFULLY TAMPING THE POWDER INTO SHAPE WITH DAMP EARTH, THE CRUDE EXPLOSIVE WAS SET AT THE HINGE OF THE MASSIVE DOOR! A SMALL POWDER TRAIL ACTED AS A FUSE---



IN AN INSTANT, HE HAD CHARGED INTO THE SMOKE-FILLED CORRIDOR, BOWLING OVER THE DAZED GUARDS---



ACROSS THE COURTYARD TOWARDS THE ROYAL STABLES HIS SWIFT LEGS CARRIED HIM, WHILE THE STUNNED PALACE GUARDS ROUSED THEMSELVES TO PURSUIT--



BUT COWBOY SAHIB HAD NO INTENTION OF TRYING TO CRASH THE WELL-GUARDED GATES OF RANI'S PALACE! HE KNEW THE PROWESS OF HIS MIGHTY STALLION, AND---



THE SANKARAN HORSES WERE SWIFT, BUT NO MATCH FOR THE GREAT STEED THEY PURSUED--



BACK IN LARIJUNA, THERE WERE TROUBLES GALORE, THE PEOPLE HAVING BEEN FRANTIC WITH FEAR FOR THEIR MISSING RULER! BUT HE QUICKLY REINSTATED HIMSELF, AND GAVE THE NECESSARY ORDERS FOR DEALING WITH THE HOOF AND MOUTH DISEASE ---

WHAT OF THE INFECTED ANIMALS FROM SANKARA, GREAT ONE? IT WAS THERE THE PLAGUE STARTED!

DON'T WORRY ABOUT THAT, KRISHNA-- I GOT A FEELIN' THAT'LL BE TAKEN CARE OF RIGHT QUICK!



THE VERY NEXT DAY, QUEEN RANI CROSSED THE BORDER OF LARIJUNA WITH A LARGE GUARD, BRANDISHING THE RING SHE HAD TAKEN FROM COWBOY SAHIB! THE SUPERSTITIOUS PEOPLE, THOUGH SICK AT HEART, BOWED DOWN IN FEAR BEFORE THE MYSTIC SYMBOL---

BEHOLD HOW THEY KNEEL ABJECTLY! WHAT SATISFACTION IT WILL BE TO TAKE OVER THE THRONE OF COWBOY SAHIB!



CONFIDENTLY, SHE RODE THROUGH THE GATES OF LARIJUNA'S CAPITAL, THEN INTO THE THRONE ROOM!

SO YOU DID NOT TRY TO ESCAPE, EH? GOOD! MY REVENGE WILL BE ALL THE SWEETER! SOLDIERS, SEIZE THE IMPOSTOR WHO SITS ON THE THRONE WHICH THIS RING MAKES MINE!

YUH'RE OVERPLAYIN' YORE HAND, GAL-- AN' WALKIN' RIGHT INTO MUH TRAP!



THIS HERE'S THE REAL RING-- WITH THE INSCRIPTION UNDERNEATH TUH PROVE IT! YUH GOT THE COPY! I'M AWFUL RILED UP, MAAM-- AN' YUH'D BETTER START ACTIN' AWFUL AGREEABLE ABOUT LETTIN' MUH MEN TAKE CARE OF THE PLAGUE ON YORE BORDERS! UNDERSTAND?

I--I BEG YOUR MERCY, PLEASE-- PLEASE!



DAYS LATER, WHEN THE NEEDFUL WORK HAD BEEN DONE, COWBOY SAHIB ESCORTED HIS ROYAL PRISONER TO THE BORDER OF THEIR TWO COUNTRIES ---

YUH'VE GIVEN YORE WORD TUH BE A GOOD GIRL FROM NOW ON, RANI-- AN' I'M WARNIN' YUH, I'M A MAN WHO RILES EASY! ADIOS, MAAM.

FAREWELL, COWBOY SAHIB-- TILL WE MEET AGAIN!



AS THE SLIM FIGURE RODE INTO THE DISTANCE, A FIERCE HATRED WELLED UP IN THE SAVAGE QUEEN'S EYES!

HE WAS A FOOL TO LET ME LIVE, FOR I VOW TO HAVE HIS HEAD OR DIE! GATHER ALL MY LOYAL TRIBES TO ME! TELL THEM TO GIRD FOR WAR AGAINST COWBOY SAHIB! RANI, YOUR DIVINE QUEEN, HAS ORDERED IT! AWAY, WITH ALL SPEED!



AND BACK IN LARIJUNA-- UNWARE THAT SANKARAN RIDERS WERE SCOURING THE MOUNTAINS, GATHERING A MIGHTY ARMY WITH WHICH TO OVERWHELM HIM-- COWBOY SAHIB DAYDREAMED--

YUP, RAJAH, SHE WAS A SHE-DEVIL-- BUT MIGHTY PRETTY!



--SO DON'T MISS THE THRILL-A-MINUTE ADVENTURE COMING UP-- IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF COWBOY SAHIB! End

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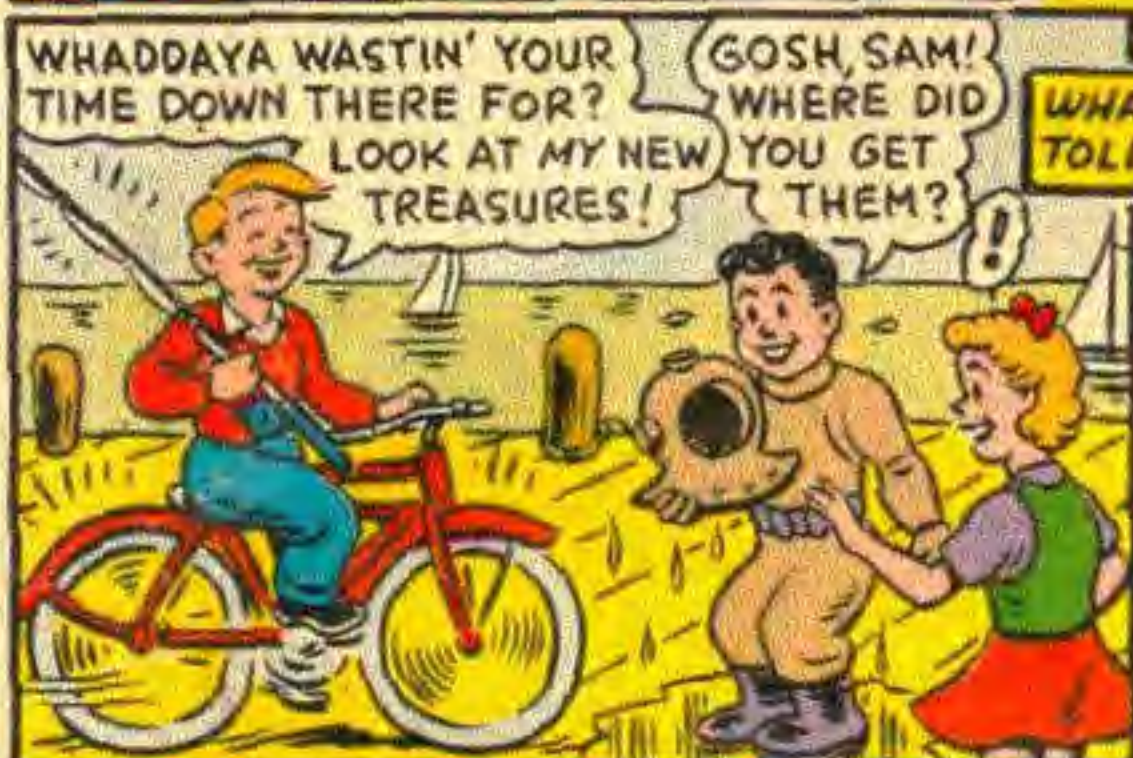
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